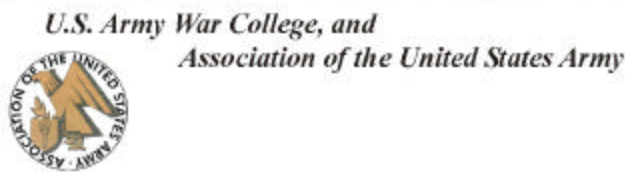




Conference Brief

Strategic Studies Institute



All-Volunteer Armed Forces and Citizenship

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Key Insights:

- The decision to adopt an all-volunteer force or conscription is ultimately a reflection of the social contract between the government and the citizenry.
- Empirical evidence refutes the assertion that the all-volunteer force has diminished societal civic virtue.
- The all-volunteer force is generally smaller, more productive, more disciplined, and more cost efficient than a conscripted force.
- Paradoxically, the all-volunteer force is more representative of society than conscription because its status as a profession encourages greater recruitment.

As Europe pursues military reforms in response to the emerging strategic environment, the issue of professional versus conscription forces necessitates an earnest dialogue. On June 21 and 22, 2002, the American Center of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris ("Sciences Po") and the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) hosted a conference entitled "All-Volunteer Armed Forces and Citizenship."¹ Professor Pascal Vennesson, Director of the Center for Social Studies in Defense, and Lieutenant General (Retired) Theodore Stroup, Senior Vice President of the Association of the United States Army, moderated the panels.

The first panel explored the "Historical Context" of all-volunteer forces from British and American perspectives. Professor Hew Strachan (All Souls College, Oxford) addressed the internal evolution of the British professional force and its external interrelationship with British society. Of the three perennial factors that have shaped the armed forces—fiscal, combat effectiveness, and social—the societal influences are the most potent. The British do not accept the assertion that civic rights and civic obligations are linked, and given their insular geography, have most often seen a small army supported by a large navy as all that is necessary. The British view conscription as a temporary necessity because it impinges on personal freedoms, and professional armies as more effective and efficient than conscript armies. The armed forces take pride in their operational effectiveness and cohesion, and deem their separateness from society as a virtue. The armed forces' "right to be different" image reflects the nature of their business—vigilance and preparedness for war. Because of these qualities, the British hold the armed forces in higher esteem than any other institution. The ensuing civil-military "gap" has become a double-edged sword, however. The armed forces' minimal representation of society, frequent deployments, centralization of military posts, and force protection measures against terrorism have all but shrouded the British military from the public domain. To reverse these trends, the armed forces must devote more resources to marketing themselves.

Dr. Bernard Rostker (Rand Corporation) addressed the impact the all-volunteer force has had on the army and the citizenry since its institution in 1973. The U.S. experience with the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) is highly instructive for other countries considering a change from conscription. Five salient reasons account for the U.S. decision to end conscription and rely on the AVF: (1) The historical norm has been a volunteer military and an intense mistrust of standing armies. The very idea of compulsory military service violates the 14th Amendment, prohibiting involuntary service. (2) By the 1960s, conscription had lost its legitimacy and citizen

1. This conference was also sponsored by the French Ministry of Defense's Center for Social Studies in Defense, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, the Association of the United States Army, the Association of the German Army, and the United States Embassy Paris.

support. Because Selective Service required only a fraction of the available manpower to serve with numerous deferment loopholes, the system was inherently inequitable. (3) The unpopularity of the Vietnam War exacerbated the social friction caused by conscription. The arbitrariness of a system that infringed on liberty, justice, and equality could not be reformed, it needed to be replaced. (4) The case for the AVF had a greater intellectual foundation. Conscription advocates decried the all-volunteer force because it absolved the middle class of its service obligations, resulting in a military force dominated by poor, black, and uneducated soldiers. However, transforming the military into a profession offset these fears. (5) The Army lost confidence in conscription and yearned for a system that cultivated a disciplined force. Transforming the armed forces into a profession vice obligation produced remarkable results. Because of higher intelligence standards, the mental aptitude of the force exceeds the civilian norm, meaning 93 percent of new recruits are high school graduates and effectively only from the higher Mental Categories. Ethnic diversity and integration in the AVF are unmatched by any other organization, although black representation in the military is higher (20 percent) compared to the population (14 percent). Race has not become an issue and no degradation of the armed forces has resulted. The incentives associated with an AVF (wages, living standards, retirement benefits, etc.) have resulted in an average retention rate above 50 percent, meaning that less money, resources and time are spent on training recruits—a major advantage. Lastly, the myth of the political gap between the military and society must be laid to rest. The gap has always existed except for the mass mobilization during World War II. The virtue of military service for politicians is overstated since the military supports and defends the Constitution of the United States and hence has internalized civilian control of the military.

The second panel, entitled “Citizenship in the Military Context,” explored the rights and obligations of citizenship. Dr. Clara Bacchetta (University of Paris) did so in part by raising the controversial issue of trade unions in the French military. French soldiers do not have the full representation enjoyed by other citizens and deserve a vehicle for the expression of concerns. Unions can provide the means for political discourse, which is a constitutional right of citizens. The military hierarchy opposes unions since they are perceived as subversive and antithetical to discipline and allegiance. These concerns are baseless because the resolution of grievances strengthens discipline and loyalty, and in no case is there a question of such unions having the right to strike. Unions can serve as an information conduit between commanders and subordinates, and

as a key interlocutor between the military and the government. Moreover, they symbolize civilian control over the military. *Editor's note: Although trade unions struck some participants as an improper solution, the issue of the right of soldiers to representation beyond the chain of command is salient to issues of AVF and citizenship.*

Professor James Burk (Texas A&M University) examined the relationship of citizenship with the AVF. No compelling evidence supports the claim that the all-volunteer force has resulted in or is a reflection of a decline in civic virtue. Civic virtue, defined as the obligation of the citizenry to protect the liberal democratic order, is as strong among today's citizen-soldiers as with preceding military members. Studies reveal that civic virtue between military personnel and non-serving citizens is the same. Fears that the AVF would not be representative of society proved unfounded. Military reforms and incentives have proved to be an important attraction for the broad cross-section of society. World War II was an early catalyst for reform, resulting in the adoption of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Court of Appeals. The adoption of the AVF compelled the services to stop discriminatory practices, providing greater opportunities for all ethnicities and genders.

The third panel, entitled “Professional Militaries in Relation to their Societies,” focused on the extent that the AVF reflected the contemporary composition of their societies. Brigadier Roy Ratazzi (Military Attaché, British Embassy) discussed the underlying sociological issue concerning contemporary British armed forces. With the end of conscription the British armed forces must assume a high profile in the public domain in order to ensure democratic accountability and to maintain a continual flow of recruits. Corporate communication practices have become crucial for educating the public of and attracting recruits to the armed forces. Public affairs offices, marketing agencies, and public relation firms provide the link to the public. The common themes of shared enjoyment, travel, sports, and leadership role models stressing teamwork have struck a chord with the public and helped recruit and retain a quality force. The majority of society perceives the armed forces in a positive light because of their keen organizational abilities and their cooperation with law enforcement, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, and domestic support.

Doctor Christopher Coker (London School of Economics) addressed the evolving complexion of the British military. The gulf between the military and civilian communities is closing. The British military is drifting from its 19th century institutional roots, which originally held a covenant with society, meaning its obligation was unconditional and rarely broken, to a corporate institution, which holds a

contractual agreement with society. Consequently, individuality in the military is on the rise, undermining teamwork. Generals are abandoning their role as “guardians of knowledge” and becoming “military experts,” signifying a decline in responsibility and accountability. That is, generals are now becoming “experts” and like experts across the spectrum from scientists to environmentalists they are actually more accountable to civil society than in the past. No longer can they hide behind “professionalism” and be held accountable after the event; they are now increasingly accountable during a war. The emergence of the transnational state threatens the nation-state as the primary political entity. Racial, class, and religious loyalties as well as supranational entities (e.g., International Criminal Court) are challenging the primacy of the state.

Professor François Gresle (University Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne) discussed the controversial historical roots of conscription in France and the impact of the shift to the All-Volunteer force on the military today. The presenter made three major points. First, the common perception of one system, conscription, used in the French military for about 300 years, is misleading. Despite conscription, the mass army model has been constantly declining in France at least since the mid-1960s. The end of conscription is the formal confirmation of a historical trend. Second, it is wrong to assume that conscription has been over a century a constant guarantor of smooth relations between the armed forces and the nation. It is only at the end of the 19th century, and partly against the will of professional soldiers, that the military became the “teacher of the Nation.” But the “golden age” of conscription was short, from 1905 to 1913. Just after World War I, the vast majority of veterans were pacifists, if not antimilitaristic and, according to Professor Gresle, that goes a long way to explain the defense strategy of 1939-40. The impact of the shift to the AVF on the relation between armed forces and society is therefore modest. Third, Gresle argues that the AVF is not truly a “profession.” The armed forces are made of different subgroups with different status, and various short-term contracts. This heterogeneity might cause some internal conflict that could damage the global cohesion of the military. The relation between the military and the public is based on the efficient accomplishment of specific missions (sometimes more “humanitarian” than truly military), more than some mythical image of a special role devoted to the soldier. Finally, the issue of diversity in recruitment and in the training of soldiers for their second career will be major issues for the French military.

The fourth panel, “Political Realities and Professional Militaries,” addressed the danger of a rift developing between the AVF and the society it serves.

Professor Peter Feaver (Duke University) reported on the results of a major multi-person study of the U.S. civil-military gap.

Overall, the picture is mixed: the worst fears of some observers were not realized but real concerns were identified that, if left un-addressed, could develop into serious problems for the AVF. There are many gaps, some small, some large. One of the largest is the trend for military officers to develop something of a partisan identity, the so-called *republicanization* of the force. Public confidence in the military is high, but it coexists with public perceptions that the military regularly acts in unprofessional ways. Military officers, for their part, express support for the norm of civilian control but are also willing to embrace other norms that are at odds with traditional understandings of civilian control. There has been a marked decrease in the percentage of veterans in U.S. Congress — this is partly a generational phenomenon as the WWII generation passes, but it also appears to be linked to the AVF, the post-Vietnam malaise, and changes in American electoral politics since the 1970s. Veteran status only has a marginal effect on floor votes in Congress (where other factors are most likely to swamp veteran's effects anyway), but it appears to have a very strong impact on the likelihood that force will actually be used — the more veterans in the political elite, the less likely force will be used, a statistical relationship that extends from 1816-1992.

Admiral (Ret.) Dieter Wellershoff (Federal College of Security Policy Studies, Germany) discussed the political-military reasons for retaining partial conscription in Germany. 71 percent of the Bundeswehr is an all-volunteer force, and 29 percent are conscripts, who have a 9-month service obligation. Citizens may opt to fulfill their national service obligation either in the military, social services, civilian emergency assistance, or police and development services. Germany retains conscription for three salient reasons. First, it ensures Germany maintains a sufficiently trained, well-equipped and fully-manned force for crisis mobilization, considering the fact that 45 percent of the volunteers are recruited from the conscripts. Second, it ensures that the bond between society and the armed forces remains strong and close. Political control of the military prevents the armed forces from drifting away from society, averting the so-called state-within-a-state phenomenon the Weimar Republic experienced. Conversely, AVF can decouple this relationship by insulating the armed forces from society, which will become indifferent to the military, regard service personnel as mercenaries, and permit the government to deploy the armed forces without deliberate debate and

consultation. This state of affairs would also place the interests of the military-industrial complex above the needs of the military. Third, it is difficult to assess to any degree of certitude the comparative economic advantages of conscription and the AVF, and these calculations are often made in a biased fashion by those who want to end conscription. Rather, it is better to highlight the extra cost of labor for its social services, civilian emergency assistance, police, and development services. One cannot understate the societal advantages conscription provides with lower unemployment and health insurance needs. Finally, not all national defense requirements and cultures are the same; what works for some European nations, for instance, may not work for others, and Germany's particular security requirements need to be studied carefully.

The fifth panel, entitled "Views of the Future: Implications of Social-Political-Military Relations," focused on the common threads among the different national service systems and how they might aid in the formulation of policy. Doctor Curt Gilroy (Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense—Personnel and Readiness) examined the investment requirements of the AVF in terms of resources, time, and energy. The end of the Cold War precludes the need for mass armies. Small, select forces are not only sustainable politically, but are also more economical. Lower personnel turnover and longer enlistments require less funding, less time, and fewer resources for initial training, thereby offsetting higher wages and recruitment costs. Higher reenlistment rates result in a more experienced and trained force. With such a large population base, the military has the luxury of selecting the best qualified and motivated personnel. The result is a force more easily trained with greater performance and fewer disciplinary problems, and increased productivity requires fewer personnel to accomplish tasks.

Rear Admiral Richard Cobbold (Royal United Services Institute), speaking of the British experience, opined that the AVF is more adaptable to the evolving strategic environment and emerging technologies. The terrorist threat to the homeland demands that the military integrate more effectively with other agencies and have a higher profile in the community. The reserves, which are the vital link between the citizens and the armed forces, may assume a more prominent role than previously. Senior leaders have become casualty averse. If force protection factors hinder the prosecution of an operation, or the citizens at home are in more danger than the soldiers abroad, then casualty aversion becomes politically untenable, and indeed the whole expeditionary strategy may come under threat. Regarding ethnic minorities, the AVF may not be as ethnically represented as a conscription force, but tends to have greater racial harmony. Regarding gays in the military, expulsion from the armed forces should rest on conduct that affects the operational

effectiveness of the service rather than sexual orientation. Because of the military's unique profession, a civil-military gap will always exist but must not grow too wide. Lastly, a healthy AVF requires that the nation devote sufficient resources. The community's penchant for security-on-the-cheap, while devoting a high proportion of the budget to health services, transport, and education, means that the armed force must do more with less. Under these circumstances, the small, efficient, productive AVF is the appropriate force structure for the future.

Doctor Paul Klein (Social Studies Institute of the German Armed Forces) examined the current socio-political realities in Germany regarding partial conscription. Although Germany retains partial conscription in case swift, full mobilization is needed, the strategic environment renders such a need obsolete. Conscription retains two considerable advantages. It precludes expensive recruitment campaigns, and the government can choose the most intellectually and physically qualified candidates from the population base to serve. However, fears of a state-within-a-state emerging as a result of the AVF are overstated. The Federal Republic of Germany is not the Weimar Republic and the same conditions are not in play. Smaller, efficient forces are no more expensive than a large conscription force. Large armies are obsolete—the future lies in multinational units conducting collective security missions.

Conclusion

Above all else, the decision to adopt an all-volunteer force or conscription is a reflection of the social contract between the government and the citizenry. The conference raised issues which will prove invaluable for countries considering converting to an all-volunteer force, particularly in terms of size, costs, and civil-military relations. The all-volunteer force may not be suited for every country, but the decision should not be based on preconceived notions either.

The views expressed in this brief are those of the panelists and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. This conference brief is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

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